

authoriun=o,uniquepart=base,hash=a96aa046c63e49a6dd7fcc4d55434adefamily=Campbell,
familyi=C., given=Alistair, giveni=A., givenun=o

Introduction to English Linguistics

9: Old English



P. S. Langeslag

Definition

c. 450–c. 1150

Settlement Pattern (Bede)

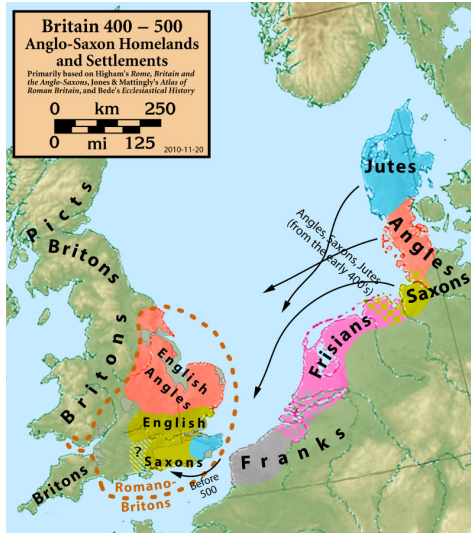


Figure: Homelands and Settlements (CC-BY-SA WMC user “my work”)

Political Geography



Figure: England c. 600 (CC-BY-SA WMC user Hel-hama)

Literary Geography



Figure: Pre-Conquest writing centres (CC-BY Arjen P. Versloot)

Politics and Regiolects

Main Kingdoms

- ▶ Wessex
- ▶ East Anglia
- ▶ Mercia
- ▶ Northumbria

Main Dialects

- ▶ West Saxon
- ▶ Kentish
- ▶ Anglian (Northumbrian and Mercian)

West Saxon

- ▶ Early: King Alfred (late ninth century)
- ▶ Late Ælfric (late tenth, early eleventh centuries)

Early West Saxon	Late West Saxon	Translation
fierd	fyrð	army, campaign
hīeran	hȳran	hear
scēap	scēp	sheep

Script

ƒ	ŋ	þ	ǿ	ʀ	ʁ	χ	ƿ	ʒ	ʈ	ɭ	ϕ	ʝ	ɮ	ʎ	ɥ	↑	β	ɱ	ɯ	ɿ	ɤ	ɛ	ɸ	ɹ	ɻ	ʁ	ɽ	ɰ	*	ʏ
f	ū	þ	ō	r	c	g	w	h	n	ī	g	ē	p	e	s	t	b	e	m	l	i	ē	d	ā	æ	ȳ	ī	ē		
e	r	o	s	ā	ē	y	y	æ	ȳ	s	e	o	e	o	i	ī	e	h	a	a	n	þ	æ	c	s	r	o	a		
o		r		d	n	f	n	g	d		r	h	o	l	g	r	o		n	g	g	e	g		c		r	r		
h		n				u	n	l					þ		l		c		n	u		l								

- ▶ Anglo-Frisian Futhorc, ss. v–xi, Old English, 29–33 graphemes
- ▶ Roman alphabet, reintroduced c. 597

A	<i>Æ</i>	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O	P	R	S	T	<i>þ</i>	<i>Ð</i>	U	<i>ƿ</i>	Y
a	<i>æ</i>	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	l	m	n	o	p	r	s	t	<i>þ</i>	<i>ð</i>	u	<i>ƿ</i>	y

$\neg$ = “and”

Characterization

- ▶ A synthetic, fusional language (cf. German, Latin)
(High morpheme-per-word ratio; overlays of meaning)
- ▶ A comparatively free word order (cf. Latin)
- ▶ Modest but well-integrated presence of Latin loans from different periods

A Fusional Language

Fusional languages (Latin, German, Old English) may overlay multiple data points onto the same morpheme.

m	singular	plural
Nom.	stān	stān as
Acc.	stān	stān as
Gen.	stān es	stān a
Dat.	stān e	stān um

Sound Changes: Front Mutation

boot : boots.

house : houses.

foot ... feet?

Sound Changes: Front Mutation

boot : boots.

house : houses.

foot ... feet?

m	singular	plural
Nom.	fōt	fēt
Acc.	fōt	fēt
Gen.	fōtes	fōta
Dat.	fēt	fōtum

Sound Changes: Front Mutation

boot : boots.

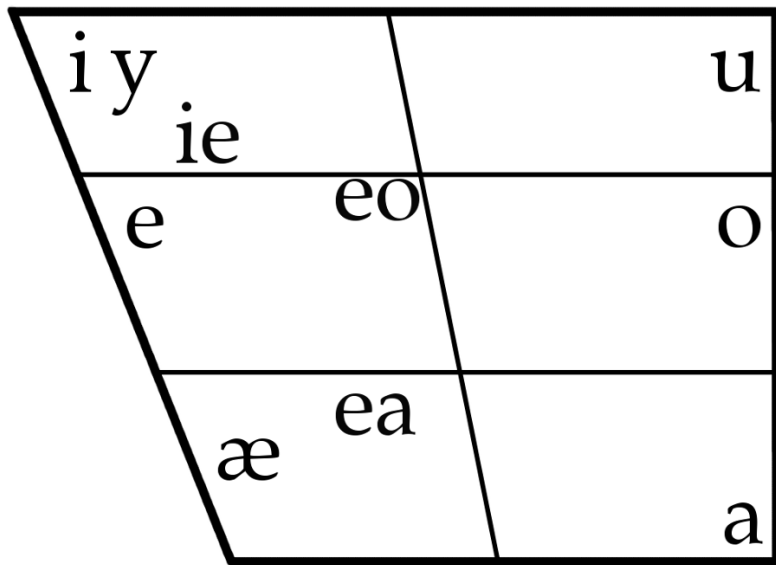
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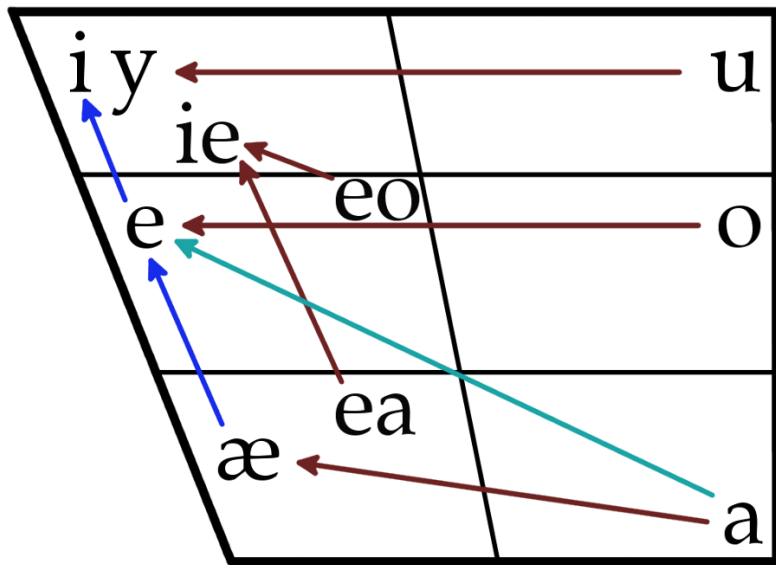
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Proto-Germanic *fōts, dative *fōti, plural *fōtiz

Sound Changes: Front Mutation



Sound Changes: Front Mutation



Sound Changes: Front Mutation

m	singular	plural
Nom.	mann	menn
Acc.	mann	menn
Gen.	mannes	manna
Dat.	menn	mannum

Proto-Germanic *mann, dative *manni, plural *manniz

What about *dæg*?

m	singular	plural
Nom.	dæg	dagas
Acc.	dæg	dagas
Gen.	dæges	daga
Dat.	dæge	dagum

What about *dæg*?

m	singular	plural
Nom.	dæg	dagas
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- ▶ PG *a* fronted to OE *æ* unless followed by a nasal consonant (Campbell §131)
- ▶ *æ* was then restored to *a* before a back vowel (Campbell §157)

cam59gra

Sound Changes: Front Mutation

Proto-English to Old English

*cuning				>	cyning
dohtor, <i>dat.</i> *dohtri	>	*dehtri	>		dehter
mann, <i>dat.</i> *manni	>	*menni	>		menn
fōt, <i>dat.</i> *fōti	>	*fēti	>		fēt
bōc, <i>pl.</i> *bōciz	>	*bēciz	>		bēc

Sound Changes: Front Mutation

Proto-English to Old English

*cuning			>	cyning
dohtor, <i>dat.</i> *dohtri	>	*dehtri	>	dehter
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Effects on PDE and German

Nonmutated	Mutated
foot	feet
woman	women
Mann, Mannes	Männer, Männern
fahren, fahre, gefahren	fährst, fährt
fuhr	führe

Sound Changes: Back Mutation

Breaking of /æ, e, i/ as occasioned by a following early OE /ɑ, u/

(/u/ may be written <o, u>, and in unstressed contexts <e>)

e	>	eo	i	>	io	æ	>	ea
hefon	>	heofon	sifon	>	siofon	*scædwu	>	sceadu
efor	>	eofor	*silfor	>	siolfor	*æfora	>	eafora

Sound Changes: Back Mutation

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efor	>	eofor	*silfor	>	siolfor	*æfora	>	eafora

In West Saxon, only occurs before a labial or liquid consonant:

PG *badwō-, POE *bædwu	>	WS <i>beadu</i> “battle”
PG *gelwa-	>	WS <i>geolu</i> “yellow”
PG *herut	>	WS <i>heorot</i> “stag”

Sound Changes: Breaking and Retraction

Triggers

A following

- ▶ lC (i.e. /l/ followed by another consonant)
- ▶ rC (/r/ followed by another consonant)
- ▶ /χ/
- ▶ /w/
- ▶ back vowel (see back mutation)

Effects

- ▶ /æ/ becomes /a/ (retraction) or /æa/ <ea> (breaking)
- ▶ /e/ becomes /o/ (retraction) or /eo/ (breaking)
- ▶ /i/ becomes /u/ (retraction) or /io/ (breaking)

Sound Changes: Breaking and Retraction

early OE	eWS	Anglian	PDE	German
æll	eall	all	all	all-
hældan	healdan	haldan	hold	halten
æhta	eahta	æhto	eight	acht
fehtan	feohtan	feohtan	fight	fechten
*liht	lioht	lēht	light	Licht

- Anglian favoured retraction, particularly of *æ* to *a*.

Sound Changes: Anglian Smoothing

The simplification of diphthongs before back consonants.

ea	æ	meaht “power”	>	mæht
eo	e	weorc “work”	>	werc
io	i	biorht “bright”	>	birht

! Although West Saxon was the OE written standard, MnE is more indebted to Anglian.

The Lexicon

Celtic

1. Continental (pre-settlement)
 - ▶ *rice* “kingdom”
 - ▶ *dūn* “mountain”
2. Insular (post-settlement)
 - ▶ *dr̄y* “magician” (Old Irish)
 - ▶ *brocc* “badger” (British Celtic)

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Greek

1. Pre-settlement
 - ▶ *cirice* “church”
 - ▶ *dēofol* “demon, devil”
 - ▶ *engel* “angel”
2. Post-Conversion (often via Latin)
 - ▶ *prēost* “priest”
 - ▶ *biscop* “bishop”

The Lexicon

Latin

- ▶ *casere* “emperor”
- ▶ *ceaster* “fortified town”
- ▶ *cempa* “warrior”
- ▶ *mæsse* “Mass”
- ▶ *mīl* “mile”
- ▶ *sealm* “psalm”
- ▶ *weall* “wall”
- ▶ *wīn* “wine”

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Old Norse

- ▶ *æsc* “light, swift ship”
- ▶ *hæfen* “harbour”
- ▶ *lagu* “law”
- ▶ *wicing* “Viking”

! Most Scandinavian loans not found in writing until ME (e.g. *they*).

Tendency to Use Germanic Roots for New Concepts/Contexts

- ▶ dryhten
- ▶ godspell
- ▶ hālig
- ▶ hǣlend
- ▶ synn
- ▶ þrȳnes

Loan Translations

- ▶ godspell (Gr. εὐαγγέλιον / *evangélion* via Lat. *evangelium*)
- ▶ þrýnes (Lat. *trinitās*)

Word Order

Present-Day English

The servant	seeks	the king
The king	seeks	the servant

Word Order

Present-Day English

The servant	seeks	the king
The king	seeks	the servant

Old English

Se þēow	sēceð	þone cyning
þone cyning	sēceð	se þēow
þone cyning	se þēow	sēceð
Se þēow	þone cyning	sēceð
Se cyning	sēceð	þone þēaw
